**Confidentiality Policy**

**Client confidentiality** is the requirement that therapists, psychiatrists, psychologists, and most other mental health professionals protect their client’s privacy by not revealing the contents of therapy.

**WHAT IS CLIENT CONFIDENTIALITY?**

For licensed mental health professionals, confidentiality is protected by state laws. Some people working in mental health who are not licensed by their state–such as phone crisis counselors or life coaches–may not be legally required to protect client confidentiality, but still generally agree not to reveal identifying information about their clients.

Confidentiality includes not just the contents of [therapy](https://www.goodtherapy.org/individual-therapy.html), but often the fact that a client is in therapy. It is common that therapists, for example, will not acknowledge their clients if they run into them outside of therapy in an effort to protect client confidentiality. Other ways confidentiality is protected include:

* Not leaving revealing information on voicemail, and seeking client permission before leaving any information at all on voicemail
* Not acknowledging to outside parties that a client has an appointment
* Not discussing the contents of therapy with a third party without the explicit permission of the client

Therapists who break confidentiality can get in trouble with state licensing boards or be sued by their clients in some cases.

**EXCEPTIONS TO CONFIDENTIALITY**

People working in mental health who are not legally required to maintain confidentiality may be forced to break confidentiality by outside circumstances. For example, a rape crisis counselor who is not a licensed therapist could be forced to testify against his or her client.

Licensed mental health professionals can also break confidentiality in some circumstances. The most common includes when a client is a threat to himself/herself or others, in which case a therapist must notify the person in danger or notify someone who can keep the client safe. In these circumstances, therapists often seek hospitalization for their clients. Therapists can also be forced to testify against their clients, but it is much more difficult to